

THE WERNER
BIOGRAPHICAL
BOOKLETS

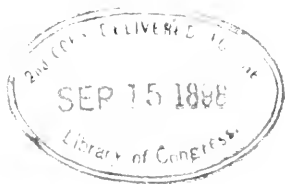
THE STORY OF PATRICK HENRY

FOR YOUNG
READERS

BY...
ALMA HOLMAN BURTON



WERNER SCHOOL BOOK COMPANY
CHICAGO NEW YORK



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.	
Chap. <u>580</u>	Copyright No. _____
Shelf <u>15B</u>	
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.	



THE WERNER BIOGRAPHICAL BOOKLETS

THE STORY
OF
PATRICK HENRY
FOR YOUNG READERS

BY ALMA HOLMAN BURTON



WERNER SCHOOL BOOK COMPANY
NEW YORK **CHICAGO** BOSTON

12947

Copyright, 1898,
BY WERNER SCHOOL BOOK COMPANY

Patrick Henry

RECEIVED

19939

March 26 -

1898

THE STORY OF PATRICK HENRY.

I.—CHILDHOOD.

Patrick Henry was born on the 29th of May, 1736, in Hanover County, Virginia. George Washington was born on the 22d of February, 1732, in Westmoreland County.

While one was a baby rocking in his cradle, the other was still so small that he played about in dresses like a girl.

Many years later these Virginia boys were great friends, and, as we shall see, they became two of the most famous men in the history of our country.

The blue-eyed Patrick grew very fast. When he was old enough to go about alone, he found playmates in the woods.

The birds sang to him, the fishes dared him to dive into the clear water after them, and the bees often droned about him until he fell asleep on the grass.

Patrick's father was a Scotchman from Aber-

deen, and some of his father's people were scholars of such renown that they were known throughout Europe.

He told the boy all about these noted ancestors, and started a private school to encourage him to study to make a great man of himself.

But Patrick did not care very much for books. He liked to guide a canoe down the South Anna River, which ran past the little farm where he lived. He spent many hours on the green bank watching the cork of his fishing rod. He often wandered far into the forest to set traps for the game. And you can easily guess that his lessons were never very well prepared.

His mother always took him to the Presbyterian church to hear Mr. Davies preach.

Mr. Davies was a wonderful man. He was tall and erect. His face was beautiful, and his manners were so polished that some one said he seemed like the ambassador of a great king.

At church Patrick kept his eyes wide open and listened to every word the preacher said. When he returned home, his mother would ask him to give the text and repeat all of the sermon he could.

Patrick loved to imitate the clear, sweet voice and graceful gestures of Mr. Davies. His mother said she hoped he would make a preacher.

But his father said he did not like books well enough for that. At last he said he believed the boy would never be a scholar, and that he was only fit for some kind of trade. So he sent him to live with a merchant, that he might learn how to buy and sell goods.

II.—THE YOUNG MERCHANT.

After Patrick had clerked for a year, his father bought some tea and coffee and spices, some woolen and cotton cloths, and some tin and iron ware from a British trader. Then he gave all that he had bought to Patrick and his elder brother, William, to set up business for themselves.

The boys were very proud of their new shop. They swept it out and dusted it every morning, and put samples of their goods in the window where the light streamed through many small panes of glass.

Now, the shop was not in a city nor even in a village. It was on the edge of their father's small farm.

For miles around there were large farms or plantations, each with a fine house where a planter lived. About the houses clustered the log cabins of the negro slaves. Farther off in the skirts of the forest stood the huts of the poor whites.

The place was rather lonesome for business. Sometimes a fine coach stopped at the little shop and a pompous planter made a purchase. But the rich did not buy much there. They traded at their own wharves with the British merchants who came in shallops up the river.

They exchanged bales of tobacco for boxes and barrels of goods which they kept in the store-rooms of their houses. The slaves did not buy anything, for their masters clothed and fed them. It was only the small farmers and the poor whites who lived from hand to mouth that traded with the Henry boys.

This class of people did not have much money. They often paid their bills by making friendly visits. They lounged about the shop telling

stories, cracking jokes, and quarreling with one another.

Patrick lay on the counter watching them. He did not talk much himself, but when he returned home he amused the rest of the family by screwing his face around and changing his voice until he looked and spoke like each one of his customers.

As the days went by, the boys found it very tiresome waiting for trade. William went sometimes behind the shelves to drink from a bottle of rum. Patrick never drank rum. When he heard the birds calling, he skipped away for a tramp through the woods.

If he chanced to see the tracks of deer, he followed them far into the underbrush. Perhaps he returned after several hours to find his brother asleep and somebody waiting to buy a penny's worth of something.

Of course, business could not be a success when carried on in that way. Before the year was out the brothers found their goods all gone and their shop closed up.

William went more and more to a grog shop,

and became a very worthless fellow indeed. But Patrick was kind and gentle in his manners; he played well on the violin and was a great favorite with the young people in the neighborhood.

And so the years passed by, and he grew up to be a tall young man, without having learned any useful business whereby he might earn a living through honest labor.

III.—THE FARM AND THE SHOP.

Patrick won the love of a bright-eyed little lass who had bought many a ha'penny worth of his peppermints. He was poor, and so was she; but he said by putting their shoulders together they might be better able to bear their poverty.

He was only eighteen, and she was younger still; but he said that their ages together made over thirty years. That sounded very old indeed! And so without a dollar in his pocket Patrick Henry married little Sarah Shelton.

Patrick's father gave him a small patch of land, and Sarah's father gave her two or three slaves to set up house keeping with.

The tall Virginia boy went into the tobacco field with his negroes. He dressed in homespun and looked like a farmer; and when the neighbors rode past, they smilingly said, "That boy of John Henry's is finding out how to work."

Patrick worked hard on week days. When Sunday came, he always went to church.

Like his father, he was an Episcopalian, but he loved so well to hear Mr. Davies preach that he attended the Presbyterian church.

One Sunday in May, 1755, Mr. Davies talked about war.

The country north of the Ohio River belonged to the English colonies, yet the French from Canada were building forts there to keep the English away.

King George had sent General Braddock to America with an army of grenadiers, and a Virginia regiment was marching to join him.

They would go to the Ohio country and drive out the French.

Patrick wished very much that he might be a soldier and help fight for the king. But the wife and babies must be fed, and so he toiled on in the field with the negroes.

One Sunday in August Mr. Davies looked very sad when he rose to preach.

He said that news had just come from the Ohio country. General Braddock had been killed and his army defeated. Many brave Virginia boys lay dead on the field of battle.

Yet, he said, a Virginia officer named George Washington, had saved a part of the army.

"Colonel Washington," said Mr. Davies, "is only twenty-three years old. I cannot but hope that Providence has preserved the youth in so signal a manner for some important service to his country."

"Ah," thought Patrick, "George Washington has done so much for his country, and he is only twenty-three!"

He looked down at his hands. They were brown and rough with toil.

"Alas!" he said, "I do my best, and yet I cannot even make a living on my little farm!"

This was quite true.

Patrick could not make his crops grow. Then his house caught fire and burned to the ground. It was all very discouraging!

He thought, if he tried once more, he might succeed as a merchant. So he sold his slaves, and with the money which they brought he built a house and purchased a small stock of goods.

That very year the tobacco crop failed. People were not able to pay for what they bought. There was nothing to do but wait for the next crop.

Meantime Patrick's shop became the lounging place for the whole neighborhood.

The small planters and overseers dropped in to talk about crops. The trappers from beyond the Blue Ridge Mountains stopped with their packs of furs to tell of the Indians on the frontiers.

The ferrymen who paddled the boats across the river repeated the latest gossip of the Yankee peddlers from New York and Boston and Philadelphia. The sons of the rich planters stopped often to talk about horse-racing, cock-fighting, and deer-stalking. But more than all else, these young fellows talked about the French war in the North.

One day they told of the dashing British officers who were stopping at Alexandria, and declared

that red coats and gold lace were turning the heads of all the pretty girls.

Another day they said young Colonel George Washington, with a Virginia regiment, had joined the British General Forbes, and they were marching together to capture the French fort on the Ohio River.

And then, a few weeks later, they hurried in to tell how the French fort was taken, and how everybody thought that the French would be defeated at Quebec.

Now, all this talking was very exciting! Nobody enjoyed it more than Patrick himself. Yet talking would not settle bills. The tobacco crop failed a second time, and he was obliged to shut up his shop.

And so, at the age of twenty-three, Patrick Henry, with a wife and little children to provide for, did not have a shilling in his pocket. But his father helped a little and Sarah's father helped a little, and they managed to keep the wolf from the door.

"There is one thing I can say about Patrick," said Sarah's father; "he does not swear nor drink, nor keep bad company."

IV.—THE LICENSE TO PRACTICE LAW.

It was just about Christmas time that Patrick failed in business.

There was great merry-making in the neighborhood; and on Christmas eve, the young people were all invited to a party at the house of Colonel Dandridge, a rich planter living near the Henrys. Thomas Jefferson was one of the guests.

He was a fine lad, sixteen years old, and was on his way to attend William and Mary College at Williamsburg.

When Jefferson was introduced to Patrick Henry, he thought him a very rough-looking fellow; but he soon found that he was the best fiddler, the best story-teller, and the jolliest joker in the company.

When he heard about his misfortunes and saw the lonely little shop with its window boarded up and its door closed, he said to himself, "It is too bad that such a merry soul is so idle and shiftless!" He never expected to see the poor merchant again.

A few months later, as Jefferson was sitting in his room in Williamsburg, he heard a knock at the

door. Imagine his surprise when, upon opening it, he saw Patrick Henry, of Hanover County.

There he stood, dressed in coarse homespun and covered with the dust of his journey. His hair hung in tangles about his ears. He looked so shabby that the rich young student thought he had come to beg.

When Patrick told him he had come to the city to pass an examination to be a lawyer, Jefferson smiled and thought he must be joking. But the deep-set blue eyes looked very serious under the shaggy brow.

"I am going to try to make a man of myself, Tom," he said, "and if I pass with the judges I shall let you know."

A few days later Patrick called again. He was much elated as he showed his license to practice law in the courts of Virginia.

"I blundered through the questions with two of the judges," he said. "They signed my paper just to get rid of me, I think. When I went to the third judge, he refused at first even to ask me anything. He thought me a greenhorn; I am sure of it by the way he looked at me. But I showed

him that the others had signed for me, and then he began to put questions.

"Of course, he asked me a great deal that I knew nothing about. I was just thinking to myself that he would soon quit in disgust, when he made a statement that did not sound like good law. We argued the question a long time. I got quite hot over my side.

"At last Judge Randolph said, 'You defend your opinion well, sir; but now let us look up the law.' He opened one book and then another. His face flushed. After a moment of silence he exclaimed, 'Here are law books which you have never read; yet you are right and I am wrong! Mr. Henry, if your industry is only half equal to your genius, you will prove an ornament to your profession!'"

Jefferson himself expected to be examined some day for the law, and listened eagerly to all that Patrick said. And when he had finished, he gave him his hand, and told him he wished him success, and invited him for a walk through the city.

The two passed down the street together.

Now, Williamsburg was the capital of Virginia.

Here the governor lived and the House of Burgesses met to make the laws.

Just as the boys were admiring the governor's mansion, with its fine garden of roses, a great coach drawn by six milk-white horses drove out at the gate.

The governor sat inside the coach. He smiled, and waved his hand at young Thomas Jefferson, who doffed his three-cornered hat and bowed most gracefully.

Then many fair ladies smiled upon the rich and elegant college boy. No doubt, they wondered that he walked with such an awkward looking fellow; but Thomas Jefferson was pleased with the wit of his companion.

They walked through the park and then stopped at the famous Raleigh tavern, where Thomas told about the gay times the young folks had in the ball-room. "But nobody in Williamsburg plays the fiddle so well as you, Patrick," he said.

They visited the capitol, and went up the broad portico into the room where the burgesses met. And as they looked down from the lobby upon the empty seats below, Jefferson talked about the Vir-

ginia statesmen whom he had seen there at the last session.

He said that his favorite was Colonel George Washington, who had marched with Braddock against the Indians and had afterwards captured the French fort at the head of the Ohio.

It was all very interesting to Patrick. He wondered if he should ever meet the famous men who sat together on those benches and helped the king's officers make laws for the colony of Virginia. He was delighted with everything he saw, for he had never been in a town before.

At last he bade good bye to his courteous friend, and, mounting his horse, he rode away with his lawer's license safe in the saddle bags beneath him.

V.—THE KING AND HIS PROVINCE.

It was in 1760 when Patrick Henry got permission to be a lawyer. At that time Virginia, like most of the other colonies in America, was still a province belonging to England.

The king of England sent over a governor to

rule in his stead. The governor chose a few men to advise him about the affairs of the province, and when they met together they were called the council.

The people elected delegates, called burgesses, who met every year in Williamsburg with the council. And when the burgesses and the council agreed on any measure for the public good, it became the law of the land.

Sometimes the king himself made laws for his provinces, without asking the consent of anybody. This did not please the people very well. Yet they had always been loyal to their king, whatever he did.

It was said that Virginia was the most loyal of all the colonies. But when young George the Third came to the throne, the Virginians had hardly stopped shouting over his coronation before they saw that he would make them a great deal of trouble.

The first complaint was about the salaries of the clergymen. Because there was so little coin in the country, the people paid their debts in paper money, or in tobacco.

The clergy had always been paid in tobacco; but one year, when the tobacco crop was poor, the law was passed that clergymen should be paid in paper money instead of tobacco. This made their salaries much smaller than ever before.

Now, some of the clergy in Virginia were noble men, and did a great deal of good, and among them was Patrick Henry's own uncle. But there were many who were not worthy of the name of clergymen.

They lived in fine houses. They went hunting with their hounds across country. They loved horse-racing, dice-playing, and wine. They courted the rich, and neglected the poor.

You can guess that such kind of men would not like to have their salaries made any less. They sent a petition to the king against it.

The king declared the law void; and then the clergymen went into court and sued the tax-collectors for the full amount of their pay.

Very few lawyers were willing to oppose the clergymen. The king was on their side, and the governor favored them, too.

But when some of the planters in Hanover County

asked young Patrick Henry to take a case against the clergymen, he said he would do the best that he could.

VI.—THE PARSONS' CAUSE.

When it was noised about that the "parsons" were having a trial in the little brick court-house, people hurried in on horse, on foot, and in carriages. There were rich planters in velvet and lace, farmers in homespun, and poor whites in rags.

As Patrick watched them from the door of the tavern, he was glad that so many of his neighbors would hear his speech. He knew that if he won this case he would have many others.

But when he saw his uncle, the clergyman, step from his carriage, his courage failed him. He hastened to him, and said respectfully:

"Uncle, I am to try my first important case to-day. I shall not be able to speak before you. I would be too much embarrassed in your presence. Besides, I shall be obliged to say some hard things about the clergy."

“Well, Patrick, my boy,” said his uncle kindly, “it is not I who shall stand in the way of your success. I will go back home. But you would best let the clergy alone. You will get the worst of it.”

And the good old man returned to the carriage, and was driven away.

Then Patrick saw his father making his way through the crowd. He had quite forgotten that his father would be the judge at the trial. His heart seemed to come into his throat. Yet there was no help for him. The people were filling the court-room, and the doorway, and all the windows.

He squeezed through the packed room. There, in front, in a black robe, sat his father on a high bench, and before him sat twenty clergymen in one long row. And there were the twelve jurymen, who should bring in a verdict. It was a great moment for the young lawyer.

When he arose to speak, he looked shabby and awkward. His words came slowly. He hesitated and almost stopped speaking. The planters hung their heads. One whispered, “We should have

known better than to put the case in the hands of that shiftless fellow!"

The clergymen on the bench lifted their eyebrows, and winked and nodded to one another, as much as to say, "Our case is already won."

Judge Henry nearly sank from the bench in confusion at his son's poor speaking. "Ah, Patrick, Patrick," he thought, "you have failed on the farm and in the shop, and now you are going to fail at the law, and the wife and wee bairns at home will be wanting for food!"

But soon Patrick's voice became clear. The long, awkward body straightened up. The blue eyes flashed. He looked grand and majestic.

The crowds outside the windows, who had begun to laugh and talk, were silent. Those at the door leaned eagerly forward to see the speaker.

He told about the poverty of the people, and the taxes they had paid for the war with the French.

He dwelt on the failure of the tobacco crop, and on the struggles of the poor farmers to keep their families from starving.

Then he pictured how Christ had fed the poor,

and walked among the weak and the lowly of the earth.

And then, in scorn and anger, he pictured the many clergymen of Virginia who lived in fine houses, and feasted and drank while they were trying to take the last bit of bread from the tables of the poor.

His words were awful to the twenty clergymen. They shrank back in dismay.

Then the young lawyer stood like a lion at bay as he talked of the rights of the people.

He said the king of England had given the province of Virginia the right to make its own laws about the taxes. The House of Burgesses had passed a law providing for the use of paper instead of tobacco in payment of the clergy. This law, he said, was made to protect the poor from the oppressions of the rich.

His voice rang out clear and strong, and his eyes flashed strangely as he said that even a king had not the right to declare void a law made by the people.

"When a king becomes a tyrant," he cried, "he forfeits all right to obedience!"

Some who heard him looked frightened at such bold words. But as the speech went on, Patrick became more and more eloquent. He won the hearts of all. His father, the judge, forgot where he was, and tears streamed down his cheeks.

When the last words were uttered, the twelve jurymen went out. They soon brought back the verdict of one penny damages!

The clergymen had hoped to obtain several hundred dollars. They had lost their case, and they fled in anger and disappointment from the courtroom. But the planters shouted the name of their young lawyer. They bore him out on their shoulders and set him down in the yard where all might shake his hand.

And, for many years in Hanover County, if any one chanced to make a fine speech, the highest praise he could receive was that he was "almost equal to Patrick when he pleaded against the parsons."

VII.—THE STAMP ACT.

After his victory over the clergymen, Patrick Henry had all the business he could attend to.

Whoever got into trouble hastened to ask the young lawyer to help him get out of it.

His fees increased. He soon became so rich that he loaned money to his father, and then he loaned to Sarah's father.

He could not throw off his old habits at once. He still loved to hunt and to fish. Sometimes he was away in the forest whole days at a time.

Sometimes he came into the court-room with his gun in his hand and his buckskin clothes red with the blood of the deer he had killed. But he studied hard and read a great deal of history, and talked much with the people as he traveled about from court to court.

Now just at that very time there was good reason for talking. The king and his Parliament were beginning to make trouble. They saw the colonies getting richer and richer.

Ship after ship came over the sea laden with furs, wheat, tobacco, and rice from America. Even cotton was beginning to be profitable.

"Those colonies across the sea shall be taxed," said the king.

So Parliament, with the king's advice, made a

law that required all legal papers in America to be stamped. If a man made a deed of his farm, or wrote out a will on his death bed, or got a license to marry, he had to use stamped paper bought in England. The price to be paid for the paper was much greater than the cost of it, and thus a large tax might be collected.

The Americans said that they alone had the right to vote a tax. They were willing to vote for a tax, but Parliament should not do it for them.

Almost all the colonies sent petitions to the king against the Stamp Act. The province of Virginia sent a petition signed by George Washington and many others. But the king gave no answer. What should be done?

If the tax were paid once, it would have to be paid twice.

"We must fight the law," said someone.

"But most of the burgesses are the mere tools of the king," said another; "let us elect Patrick Henry a burgess. He is bold and will defend our rights."

And so it came about that Patrick Henry was

sent to the House of Burgesses to speak for the people of his county against the oppressions of the king and his Parliament.

VIII.—IN THE HOUSE OF BURGESSES.

It was a fine day in May when Patrick Henry came into Williamsburg to sit in the House of Burgesses.

No one paid the least attention to the young man in homespun as he rode along on his lean horse. There was too much else to think about.

The king had not listened to any petitions. The Stamp Act had become a law, and everybody on the streets was wondering what the burgesses would do.

When the House assembled, some of the burgesses said there should be nothing done until the other colonies were heard from.

Others said that, because the Stamp Act was now a law, it was best to obey it. And then the most of them sank back in their seats as if the question were settled.

But Patrick Henry rose to his feet. He looked very tall and awkward. He held in his hand the yellow leaf of an old law book, on which he had written some resolutions.

These resolutions declared that if a law was unjust it should be opposed; that the Virginians had a charter from the king granting the rights of English subjects; that English subjects had the right to tax themselves, and so the Virginians had that right; and that whoever claimed that Parliament could tax the Virginians without their consent was an enemy to the colony!

Those were very bold words to use about a law made by the king!

The most timid of the burgesses fairly trembled with fear as they listened.

Then Patrick Henry made a great speech. Nothing like it had ever been heard in Williamsburg.

It was all against the unjust tax, and he closed it with flashing eye, saying: "Cæsar had his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell, and George the Third"—

“Treason! treason!” shouted the friends of the king.

“And George the Third,” he repeated, “may profit by their example—*If that be treason, make the most of it!*” he cried in tones that echoed through the hall.

Thomas Jefferson, the law student, who was in the lobby, almost cheered aloud when he heard the brave words.

George Washington, who sat with the burgesses, nodded his head; and so many others believed what Patrick Henry had said that the bold resolutions were adopted.

From that day Patrick Henry, the most eloquent man in Hanover County, was called the most eloquent man in Virginia.

IX.—THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS.

The Virginia resolutions against the Stamp Tax were carried to the colonies in the North. They were published in New England and scattered all over the country.

The governor of Massachusetts wrote to the king's council: "I thought that the Americans would submit to the Stamp Act. But the Virginia resolves have proved an alarm bell."

And General Gage, the commander of the British forces, wrote from New York: "The Virginia resolves have given the signal for a general outcry all over the continent."

People now began to speak out more boldly. The Virginians declared they would not wear clothes bought in England until the tax was removed.

And when the rich planters went about clad in homespun, Patrick Henry looked quite as well as the best of them, and he talked much better than any.

After a time the king abolished the stamp tax, but he straightway put a tax on tea. Now, taxed tea was just as bad as taxed paper. People said they would not drink tea. And soon a swift courier rode into Williamsburg, saying that Boston had thrown the tea chests of the British merchants into the harbor.

Then another came in haste saying, that the king

had shut up the port of Boston. The British general would not even allow a little shallop to enter the bay, and he kept his soldiers standing in the streets of the city with their bayonets fixed.

When the House of Burgesses met and ordered a day of fasting and prayer for the trouble that had come upon Boston, Patrick Henry spoke more boldly than ever against the tyranny of the king.

Governor Dunmore ordered the burgesses to separate. They hurried to meet again at Raleigh Tavern. Here they appointed a committee to write to the other colonies about what should be done. There was much writing back and forth between the North and the South.

Many said there should be a convention to form a union of the colonies. But, in our forefathers' day, as in our own, there were some men who did not believe in experiments.

A member of the South Carolina legislature laughed at the idea of a convention: "What kind of a dish will a congress from the different British colonies make?" he said. "New England will throw in fish and onions, the Middle States flaxseed and flour, Maryland and Virginia will add

tobacco, North Carolina pitch, tar, and turpentine, South Carolina rice and indigo, and Georgia will sprinkle the whole composition with sawdust. That is about the kind of a jumble you will make if you attempt a union between the thirteen British provinces."

But another member retorted: "I would not choose the gentleman who made these objections for my cook, but I venture to say that, if the colonies proceed to appoint deputies to a Continental Congress, they will prepare a dish fit to be presented to any crowned head in Europe."

At last the colonies agreed to choose delegates to meet in convention at Philadelphia.

The Virginians chose Peyton Randolph a delegate for his dignity, George Washington for his military knowledge, Richard Henry Lee and Patrick Henry for their eloquence, Edmund Pendleton for his knowledge of law, Richard Bland for his skill in writing, and Benjamin Harrison for his popularity with the planters.

And so we see that Patrick Henry was chosen with the richest men in Virginia to go to Philadelphia to attend the first Continental Congress.

The young lawyer was very busy for several weeks getting his affairs in order before starting on so long a journey.

X.—THE SPEECH IN CARPENTERS' HALL.

On a hot day in August, 1774, Patrick Henry and Edmund Pendleton set out for Philadelphia. They traveled on horseback over a bridle path through the forest, and swam all the streams.

At length they came to Mount Vernon, where Colonel Washington lived. Here they passed the night, and the following morning, after an early breakfast, Washington mounted his horse to go with them to Congress.

As the two guests, with their three-cornered hats in their hands, were bowing low to Martha Washington, she said, "I hope you will both stand firm. I know George will."

And you may be sure they started off more determined than ever to demand justice of the king.

They soon crossed the Potomac at the Falls, and then followed the path toward Baltimore. They

were a noble group of men. Edmund Pendleton was much the oldest. His hair was gray and his face was earnest.

George Washington was in the prime of manhood. He sat his horse like a true cavalier, and in the uniform of a British colonel he looked like a soldier.

Patrick Henry was thirty-eight years old. The great orator stooped forward as he rode, and his clothes hung loosely about him. He was not very handsome, but when he spoke his face lighted up, and you would have said he was almost beautiful.

They talked very earnestly over the troubles with the king, and all three agreed that a crisis had come. They reached Philadelphia just in time for the convention; and so they did not become acquainted with many of the members from the other colonies before the meeting began.

After the delegates had assembled in a large brick building, called Carpenters' Hall, the roll was read and officers were elected. Then the place became very still. The delegates were almost all strangers to one another. Each feared to say anything lest he might offend some one else.

At last a member moved to open the convention with prayer. John Jay, of New York, hurried to oppose the motion. "No man," he said, "can expect Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Quakers, and Catholics to unite in worship."

But Samuel Adams, from "stiff-necked" Massachusetts, arose and said: "I, for my part, am no bigot. I can listen to a prayer from a gentleman of piety who is a patriot. I have heard that the reverend Mr. Duché, an Episcopalian, deserves that title; therefore, Mr. President, I move that Mr. Duché read prayers to-morrow morning."

The motion was carried. And then again the place became very still. Each man had the same complaints to make against the king, yet no one liked to speak of them.

The silence became so intense that some said afterwards they could hear their hearts beat.

At last a tall young man arose. Everybody turned about to look at him. He was dressed in dark grey homespun, his wig was unpowdered, and his sleeves had no frills.

He began very calmly to state why they had met together. But soon his voice swelled, his form became erect, his eyes glowed. All leaned forward to read his wonderful face. He closed with the words: "The distinctions between Virginians, Pennsylvanians, New Yorkers, and New Englanders are no more. I am not a Virginian, but an American!"

The delegates were amazed at his eloquence.

"Who is he? who is he?" they cried.

It was Patrick Henry, and from that day the best orator in Virginia was known as the best orator in America. He argued with the rest of the delegates not to import any more goods from England nor to export them to England until Parliament should respect the rights of Americans.

Henry spoke many times during the Congress; and when it was decided to appeal again to the king to allow the colonies to vote their own taxes, he was one of the committee chosen to write the petition.

Soon after this the first Continental Congress adjourned to meet when the king should send his reply.

XI.—TAKING UP ARMS AGAINST THE KING.

When Henry reached home, the neighbors crowded around him, asking many questions about the city of Philadelphia and the people whom he had met there.

"Who was the greatest man there?" asked one.

"Always excepting yourself, Patrick," shouted another, laughing, "I'll warrant you were the greatest of all!"

Henry told them about the city that William Penn had built, and about the famous men who were at the congress.

There was Roger Sherman, of Connecticut, who "never said a foolish thing in his life." There was Samuel Adams, of Massachusetts, whose "head was wanted badly in England;" and his cousin John Adams, who "had forty towns in the Bay Colony at his back."

There was John Rutledge, of South Carolina, who was "by far the greatest orator of them all," with his brother Edward, who had learned fine manners at the court of the king, but had become a patriot while listening to the debates in Parliament on the tea tax.

There was Philip Livingston, of New York, whose letters to Edmund Burke had won that great English orator to the American cause; and there was John Jay, whose "pen was the finest in America."

"Of course, you know all about our own men," he said. "Everybody made much of Richard Henry Lee, for they had heard how he made a bonfire of the stamps; and Peyton Randolph was elected chairman of the convention. But for solid information and sound judgment," said Henry, "Colonel Washington was the greatest man in the Congress."

Now, the king gave no heed to the petition of Congress. He sent over a fleet of ships and an army to aid General Gage in making war on the colonies if they would not obey the law.

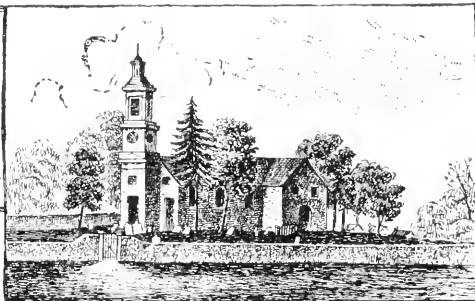
The second Virginia convention met in St. John's church, in Richmond, on the 2nd of March, 1775.

Patrick Henry moved in a convention that Virginia be put in a state of defence.

Many opposed doing this. They said it was the duty of every man to obey the king.

And so the Virginians were divided in opinion. Those who were loyal to the king were called

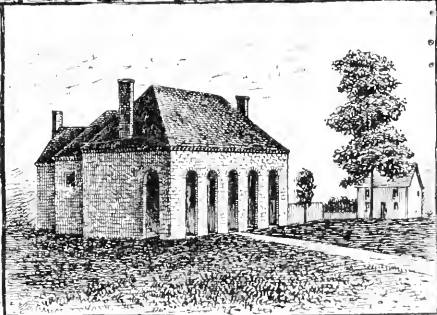
St John's
Church.



Red Hill.



The Hanover
Court-House.



W. H. WILKINSON

tories, and those who refused to obey his unjust laws were called whigs.

Patrick Henry, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Richard Henry Lee, and many others were whigs; but there were also many powerful men who were tories. When the tories opposed the motion to defend the colony, Patrick Henry made a wonderful speech.

“We must fight,” he said. “An appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left us. They tell us, sir, that we are weak! But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week or the next year? Will it be when a British guard shall be stationed in every house?”

“Sir, we are not weak. Three millions of people armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us.

“Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us.

“Gentlemen, we may cry peace! peace! but there is no peace. The next gale that sweeps from the

north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms. Our brethren in Boston are already in the field. Why stand we here idle?

"Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but, as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

The faces of all were pale. The tories were quaking with fear at the thought of having taken part in such a meeting.

But Lee and Jefferson spoke in favor of arming the colony, and Washington nodded his head, though he said nothing.

In the end it was voted to take up arms against the king's troops.

Meanwhile, the battles of Concord and Lexington were fought, near Boston. About the same time Governor Dunmore seized the powder at Williamsburg and sent it on board a British ship.

The whigs armed themselves. They rallied about Patrick Henry, and set out for Williamsburg to demand the powder.

Tories along the march begged Henry not to

plunge the colony into a war with the governor. But he pushed on his way, and the whigs joined the ranks, until over five hundred were in line.

Governor Dunmore fled from the city. Very soon after, however, he sent a promise to pay for the powder he had carried away.

Then Patrick Henry disbanded the army and started for Philadelphia to attend the second Continental Congress. His friends, fearing the governor might have him arrested, mounted their horses and rode with him to the Potomac River. As he was ferried across to the Maryland side, they gave cheer after cheer and wished him success on his journey.

XII.—THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

When Henry arrived at Philadelphia, the Congress was already in session.

One of the new delegates was Benjamin Franklin, of Pennsylvania, who had just returned from London and knew all about the king and his Parliament.

Another new delegate was John Hancock, of

Massachusetts, who told of the battles of Concord and Lexington.

The very day that Henry took his seat news came from the north that Colonel Ethan Allen had captured Ticonderoga, on Lake Champlain, with a large amount of arms and ammunition.

It was decided that the colonies must be put in a state of defence.

There was much to be done. Ships were to be built, cities on the coast to be fortified, treaties made with the Indians, and more appeals sent in to the king. It was agreed to raise troops from all the colonies, and George Washington was made commander-in-chief of the colonial army.

Patrick Henry was glad that his friend had been honored with such a high office.

Yet he knew that it was a great risk to head a rebellion against the king.

Washington knew this, too. He wanted to be loyal to the king, but he felt he must fight for the rights belonging to all English subjects.

His eyes were full of tears as he clasped Henry by the hand and said: "I fear this day will begin the decline of my reputation."

He soon left Philadelphia to take command of the American troops at Cambridge.

When Congress was adjourned, Henry and the other delegates from Virginia returned home to meet in a convention.

The governor had fled to a British ship, and so a committee was appointed to rule in his stead. Then it was decided to raise troops in the colony, and Patrick Henry was made commander-in-chief.

Soldiers hurried from every county in Virginia to the camping ground at Williamsburg. There were trappers in buckskin, and hunters in green shirts, and rich planters in fine uniforms. There was the sound of fife and drum, and banners were seen everywhere. Governor Dunmore called the whigs rebels, and summoned tories, negroes, and Spaniards to fight them.

But before the troops came to battle, Patrick Henry resigned command. He was needed in the colonial convention at Williamsburg.

The convention met on the 6th of May, 1776.

Among the new delegates was James Madison. He was just twenty-five years old. He was a great

scholar, but he was so shy that he did not attract much attention in his first debate.

Another new delegate was Edmund Randolph. He was twenty-three years old. His father was a tory, and had sailed away to England, but young Randolph remained in America to help fight for liberty.

James Madison and Edmund Randolph listened with delight to Patrick Henry's speeches.

They said he seemed like a pillar of fire, which was leading the convention through the night of despair.

When the orator proposed that the colonies should declare themselves free from Great Britain, most of the delegates were convinced that this was the only thing to do.

And so, on the 15th of May, the Virginians resolved to instruct their delegates in Congress at Philadelphia to propose a declaration of independence.

The British flag was taken down from the staff on the capitol, and a Continental flag was hoisted with thirteen bars for the thirteen colonies.

Then Patrick Henry and some others wrote out a constitution for the state of Virginia.

You know that every state in these days has a written constitution, but in those days most of the states had charters granted by the king.

It was agreed that Virginia should have a Senate and a House of Representatives to make the laws which the people wanted, a governor who should enforce the laws, and judges who should preside in the courts.

The constitution of Virginia seemed so wise that it became a model for the other states.

On June 7th, Richard Henry Lee, one of the Virginia delegates, offered the resolution in Congress that the "United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states."

Thomas Jefferson wrote the *Declaration of Independence*, and after a long debate it was signed on the 4th of July, 1776.

And when the news reached Williamsburg, bells rang, bonfires blazed in the streets, and powder sizzed and spluttered in the gutters. It was the very first Fourth of July celebration in Virginia.

XIII.—THE FIRST GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF VIRGINIA.

The Declaration of Independence was read from the steps of the governor's mansion at Williamsburg. Now, who do you think was governor? It was Patrick Henry. He had been elected before the news of the great event had reached Virginia. There he was in the mansion of the king's governors. He had won the first place in the state by his own merit.

His father and his wife, who had helped him in all the struggles on the farm and in the shop, were dead. But his aged mother, whom he loved very tenderly, was living to see his success.

George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and other whig friends wrote him beautiful letters of greeting in his new office.

But the tories laughed when they heard that Patrick Henry was elected governor. "A pretty governor he will make," they said, "with his buckskin breeches and homespun coat!"

But Governor Henry wished to represent the people as well as Lord Dunmore had represented the king. He wore a powdered wig and black

velvet clothes, and long silk hose, and shoes with silver buckles, and in cold weather he wore an ample scarlet coat.

He did not walk the streets with his dog and gun any more, but rode in a carriage drawn by four horses, and saluted the people as gracefully as the king's governors had done. The people were very proud of their governor, and he was so kind and gentle that everybody loved him.

After a time he married the beautiful granddaughter of Alexander Spotswood, who had once been the king's governor of Virginia. This made the rich planters respect him more than ever.

There was much for Governor Henry to do. The tories were plotting mischief in the state, and the war in the North was raging.

General Washington wrote again and again to Governor Henry, asking him to send more men and more supplies, and he always sent them when he could.

In October, 1777, when the British General Burgoyne surrendered to the American army at Saratoga, New York, he said the Virginia regiment was the finest in the world.

But about that very time Washington, the pride of all the regiments, was defeated on the Brandywine, in Delaware. No one grieved over this misfortune more than Governor Henry. He hurried to send food and clothing to Washington's army.

Then he sent George Rogers Clark with a regiment to the far West to capture the forts held by the British north of the Ohio River. The Indians were awed and the forts were taken from the British.

If this expedition had failed, the country which makes the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, and a part of Minnesota might to-day belong to Canada. And so these states have much for which to remember Patrick Henry.

Now, according to law, a governor might only be elected three times in succession. When Henry's third term had expired, Thomas Jefferson was elected governor, and the great orator retired to his estate among the Blue Ridge Mountains.

XIV.—THE CLOSE OF THE WAR.

It is quite certain that Patrick Henry would have strapped on his knapsack to fight for his

country if he had not been needed to help make the laws. He was elected to the legislature to help provide means to carry on the war.

The British armies had failed in the North. So they came marching into Virginia to capture the South. They burned and plundered the towns on the coast. The people fled to the mountains.

The legislature kept moving from one place to another for safety.

One day the British General Tarleton was hurrying with his troopers to arrest the lawmakers. A Virginian captain, who saw him from the window of a tavern, mounted his horse and rode by the shortest way to Charlottesville. He burst into the room where the legislature sat, crying, "Tarleton is coming!"

There was a rush for three-cornered hats. The lawmakers decided, as they ran, to meet at Staunton, beyond the mountains.

They mounted their horses and fled in different directions.

It is said that as Patrick Henry, Benjamin Harrison, Judge Tyler, and Colonel Christian were

hurrying along, they saw a little hut in the forest. An old woman was chopping wood by the door. The men were very hungry, and stopped to ask her for food.

“Who are you?” she asked.

“We are members of the legislature,” said Patrick Henry; “we have just been compelled to leave Charlottesville on account of the British.”

“Ride on, then, ye cowardly knaves!” she said in wrath. “Here are my husband and sons just gone to Charlottesville to fight for ye, and you running away with all your might. Clear out! Ye shall have nothing here.”

“But,” replied Mr. Henry, “we were obliged to flee. It would not do for the legislature to be broken up by the enemy. Here is Mr. Benjamin Harrison; you don’t think he would have fled had it not been necessary?”

“I always thought a great deal of Mr. Harrison till now,” answered the old woman, “but he’d no business to run from the enemy.” And she started to shut the door in their faces.

“Wait a moment, my good woman,” cried Mr. Henry; “would you believe that Judge Tyler

or Colonel Christian would take to flight if there were not good cause for so doing?"

"No, indeed, that I wouldn't."

"But," he said, "Judge Tyler and Colonel Christian are here."

"They are? Well, I would never have thought it. I didn't suppose they would ever run away from the British; but since they have, they shall have nothing to eat in my house. You may ride along."

Things were getting desperate. Then Judge Tyler stepped forward: "What would you say, my good woman, if I were to tell you that Patrick Henry fled with the rest of us?"

"Patrick Henry!" she answered angrily, "I should tell you there wasn't a word of truth in it! Patrick Henry would never do such a cowardly thing."

"But this is Patrick Henry," said Judge Tyler.

The old woman was astonished; but she stammered and pulled at her apron string, and said: "Well, if that's Patrick Henry, it must be all right. Come in, and ye shall have the best I have in the house." Even this ignorant woman in

the woods had heard of the courage and patriotism of Patrick Henry.

The legislature met again at last, and took measures to collect soldiers and supply food, clothing, and arms to fight the British.

The next year Washington himself came down from New York, and a French fleet, sent over by King Louis the Sixteenth of France, entered Chesapeake Bay. Lord Cornwallis, the British general, was hemmed in on all sides. He surrendered his army; and soon the British soldiers and many tories sailed away and left the American colonies to govern themselves.

Three years later General Washington and Marquis de Lafayette visited Virginia. The state wished to do great honor to the commander-in-chief of the American armies and to the young French nobleman, who had fought for liberty. And so Patrick Henry was chosen to make a speech of welcome.

The French general did not understand the English language very well; but when he saw the glowing eyes and the speaking face, and heard the rich tones of the orator's voice, he said Mr. Henry was a wonderful man.

XV.—THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.

The very next day after this great speech of welcome to Washington and Lafayette, Patrick Henry became governor of Virginia again. There were many grave questions to be solved. What should be done with the tories? That was one of the questions.

“Tar and feather them!” cried some.

“Welcome them and all other subjects of Great Britain,” cried Governor Henry. “The tories were mistaken, but the quarrel is over. We have peace again. Let us lay aside prejudice. These people who sided with the king are intelligent and industrious. We need men and women to help make a strong nation. Let all come who will.”

When some wanted to keep English ships out of the harbors, that the French and other friendly nations might trade more with us, Governor Henry said: “No! Why should we fetter commerce? Let her be free as the air, and she will return on the wings of the four winds of heaven to bless our land with plenty.”

Thus the great man pleaded liberty for all.

After serving faithfully for two years as governor, he began again to practice law in the courts.

The soldiers of the Revolution had been paid in promises on paper by the Continental Congress. They needed money so badly that they could not wait for Congress to pay, and sold the promises at low prices to speculators.

When Patrick Henry favored the passage of a bill in the legislature to prevent the sale of the paper at such low prices, one of the speculators was so influenced by his eloquence that he exclaimed, "That bill ought to pass!" although its passage would spoil his own profits.

Now, since the war with England was over, it was clearly seen that the United States of America could not make a good government without a more permanent union. There was no president. Congress was disbanding. Soon there would be no government at all.

The colonies agreed to hold a convention at Philadelphia to revise the Articles of Confederation which had kept them together during the war.

Patrick Henry was appointed a delegate, with George Washington, James Madison, and others;

but his health was too poor for him to take the long journey.

The convention at Philadelphia adopted the Constitution of the United States as we have it to-day, without the amendments.

Eight States soon agreed to the Constitution. Would Virginia ratify it? Everybody said that New York and the rest of the states would act with Virginia.

General Washington sent Patrick Henry a copy of the Constitution, and urged him to persuade the people to adopt it.

Now, we have seen that, when the king was oppressing the colonies with taxes, Patrick Henry was one of the first to propose a union. But he thought the new plan of government gave too much power to Congress and the president. He said there should be amendments to the Constitution, so that the states might have more freedom.

No one had ever known a government without a king, and it was very difficult to suit everybody.

There was a long debate in a convention at Richmond. All the other colonies watched eagerly

to see if Virginia would agree to the new plan of union. Mr. Henry urged the amendments.

At last the Constitution of the United States was ratified by Virginia, with the recommendation that amendments should be adopted when they seemed necessary. And some of the very amendments proposed by Patrick Henry were afterwards adopted by Congress.

To-day the Constitution has fifteen amendments, which have helped to make our government the best in the world.

XVI.—“THE SUN HAS SET IN ALL HIS GLORY.”

After the Constitutional Convention at Richmond, Patrick Henry continued to practice law in the courts.

He rode from place to place on horseback or in an old gig; and at the taverns where he stopped he was always surrounded by an admiring crowd.

Wealth came. He bought many plantations and prospered greatly.

Then, as the years bent his shoulders and

wrinkled his high brow, he retired to the quiet of an estate, called Red Hill, on the Staunton River.

The hospitable house stood on a slight rise of ground, surrounded by groves of oak, pine, and walnut trees.

Below it stretched the green valley, with its winding stream and gently sloping hills. In the distance towered the lofty peaks of the Blue Ridge.

In full view of this beautiful scene, the noble man sat often in a great armchair under the shade of a spreading walnut tree, or walked from grove to grove as he talked with himself. No one interrupted him then; but when the hour of solitude was over his grandchildren gathered around with a shout.

There were frolics on the grass, where the silver-haired grandfather was the noisiest of the merry-makers. And he often told stories, while the little ones listened with breathless attention, or he made his violin mimic the birds, while the joyous band about him vied at guessing which songster was a prisoner in the instrument.

Nothing tempted the great orator from this

delightful retreat of his old age. Virginia elected him governor for a sixth term, but he firmly refused the honor. His friend Washington, who had become President of the United States, asked him to be Minister to Spain, and then he asked him to be Secretary of State, and then to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; but he would listen to no offers of high place.

When John Adams became President, he urged Mr. Henry to go as an envoy to France, but he refused. The years lay heavy on his shoulders because of ill-health. Besides, he had won laurels enough.

In January, 1799, a letter came from Mount Vernon, marked "*Confidential.*" It was in the handwriting of George Washington.

Just at this time several states claimed the right to declare void some laws made by Congress. The laws were not wise, and many in Virginia said it was the duty of the legislature to refuse to obey them.

Washington implored Patrick Henry to speak in defence of the government of the United States.

Now, the great orator did not like the laws very

well himself ; but he said, when an Act of Congress became a law, it was the duty of every citizen to obey it. He agreed to tell the people what he thought about it.

It had been many years since Patrick Henry had spoken in public; and when it was noised around that he would speak at Charlottesville court-house, people flocked in from all over the country to hear him.

The college in the next county closed for a holiday, and president, professors and students hurried to find standing room in the court-house.

Before the hour for the meeting, such crowds followed the orator about that a clergyman said, to rebuke them: "Mr. Henry is not a god!"

"No," said Mr. Henry, who was deeply moved because the people were so devoted to him; "no, indeed, my friends, I am but a poor worm of the dust."

When the great orator arose to speak, he seemed stooped with age. His face was pale and careworn.

At first his voice was cracked and shrill, and his gestures were feeble; but soon his bowed

head became erect, his blue eyes glowed, his features looked like those of a young man, his voice rang out like music to the farthest listener of the thousands standing in the courtyard.

He told them they had planted thorns in his pillow, and that he could not sleep while Virginia was a rebel to the government of the United States. The Virginians had dared to pronounce the laws of Congress without force. Only the Supreme Court of the United States had the right to do that.

He said they would drive the United States government to arms against them to enforce her rightful authority; and, because they were too weak alone, the Virginians would call in the Spaniards, or the French, or the English, from over the sea, to help them fight against the government of the United States, and then these foreign powers would make them slaves.

He asked if Charlotte County had the right to defy the laws of Virginia. Then he showed them how Virginia belonged to the United States, just as Charlotte County belonged to Virginia.

"Let us preserve our strength united," he said,

“against whatever foreign nation may dare to enter our territory.”

The vast multitude hung on each word and look. When he had finished his magnificent speech, he was very weak; and as he was carried into the tavern near by, some one said, “The sun has set in all his glory.”

He returned to his home. A few weeks later, while sitting in his chair, he died.

Just before the end came, he prayed aloud in a clear voice for his family and for his country. When he breathed for the last time, his old family physician left his side to throw himself down under the trees and sob aloud. And everybody who had known the brave, generous, and gifted Patrick Henry grieved over his loss.

A marble slab covers his grave, inscribed with the name, the birth, and the death, and the words: “His fame is his best epitaph.”

Before the year closed, George Washington died also, and there was mourning throughout the land for these two great patriots, who had done so much for Virginia and for the young republic of the United States.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 838 393 A

